

# MATURE WORKERS IN ARIZONA

*"Experience is our Business"*

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## **Who are Mature Workers and Why are We Concerned?**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that by 2010, workers age 55 and older will comprise 20% of the work force (compared to 13% in the year 2000), and the U.S. will face critical shortages of qualified workers. The same is true in Arizona. A 1999 survey of older Arizonans showed that while 78% of respondents were interested in employment, only 36% were actually employed. Most employers are unaware of this issue or are just beginning to adapt to an aging work force.

## **What is Arizona Doing About It?**

At a national press conference in February 2005, Governor Janet Napolitano announced that the State of Arizona will collaborate with the AARP Foundation to build strategies to connect Arizona's mature workers to productive and satisfying careers. Under the leadership of the Governor's Office and the Mature Worker Committee of the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging, the work on this initiative will bring together Workforce Investment Boards, community colleges, state agencies, community organizations and business groups. Arizona is one of only four states involved in the AARP Workforce Initiative - the other states are Arkansas, Iowa and Mississippi. Together, the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging, AARP and other stakeholders have created a two-year plan to address mature worker issues in Arizona.

## **What are the Key Components of the Arizona Mature Worker Plan?**

Arizona, together with AARP, is working to develop partnerships among policy makers, private business and industry, trade associations, education and training organizations, community development organizations and others to increase opportunities for mature workers with new and existing business and industry. In addition, Arizona aims to provide mature workers new points of access to training that will allow them to remain competitive in the job market and to provide them with connections to employers who value their experience.

### Partnership Building - Beginning in Spring, 2005

The Mature Worker Committee will expand its efforts to include statewide representatives from the publicly-funded workforce system, labor organizations, state and local government entities, Area Agencies on Aging, and state and local Workforce Investment Boards. Municipal and tribal governments, veterans', faith-based and cultural organizations, libraries, Chambers of Commerce and the business community will also be invited to participate.

### Issue Identification - April through November 2005

Information will be collected from across Arizona, through a series of meetings with local businesses and mature workers. The goals of these community meetings are to raise awareness about mature worker issues, and to learn from employers and seniors about the barriers that may prevent hiring mature workers.

#### Mature Worker Day - September 2005

The Governor will designate a "Mature Worker Day," intended to help raise the visibility and recognition of the value of mature workers in the state.

#### Strategy Development - October through November 2005

Guests from across the state will be invited to a meeting where the identified barriers will be discussed and participants will develop a set of strategies to address the barriers. Also during this time frame, at least one Mature Worker Job Fair will be held.

#### Review of Recommendations - December 2005 through March 2006

Results from the Strategy Development meeting will be presented to the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging for review. After review, the strategies and recommendations will be forwarded to the Governor's Office for approval.

#### Governor's Conference on Aging - May 2006

The Governor's Advisory Council on Aging will host the Governor's Conference on Aging in May 2006. Mature worker issues will be a primary focus of the conference, including review of previously completed research on mature workers and the development of an implementation plan for the approved strategies.

### **Are the Local Community Meetings the Only Way Arizona Residents Can Provide Input to the Governor's Office About the Arizona Mature Worker Plan?**

Everyone is invited to visit the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging's website at <http://www.azdes.gov/gaca> to review the Arizona Mature Worker Plan. Anyone wishing to give input on this plan is invited to submit comments by email to [gaca@azdes.gov](mailto:gaca@azdes.gov)

### **Why is Your Input Important?**

Input from community leaders across Arizona is needed to help raise the awareness and appreciation of mature workers. Your input is also important to help identify the opportunities for mature workers and the employment barriers to be overcome so that Arizona's mature workers seeking worthwhile and meaningful employment will be connected with employers who value the many aspects of employing mature workers.

### **What can Arizona Communities Do to Prepare for the Opportunities and Challenges of a Mature Workforce?**

It is impossible for Arizona state agencies or any one organization or institution to adequately prepare our communities for the upcoming changes in Arizona's workforce. To ensure increased workplace opportunities for older people and to meet the upcoming workforce needs of Arizona's employers, local communities need to further engage their residents, community based organizations, local governments, business, schools and all other appropriate partners while working toward these goals.

Contact the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging at 602-542-4710 for more information about mature workers and how you or your organization can become involved in this initiative.

# **ARIZONA PLAN FOR THE MATURE WORKER**

**FEBRUARY 20, 2005**

## **PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The State of Arizona, under the leadership of Governor Janet Napolitano, is committed to working with the AARP Foundation and leaders of business, government and a number of other organizations to raise visibility, awareness, appreciation of and opportunities for mature workers and their communities. Arizona, together with AARP, will work to develop partnerships among policy makers, private business and industry, trade associations, education and training organizations, community development organizations and others to increase opportunities for mature workers with new and existing business and industry. In addition, Arizona aims to provide mature workers new points of access to training that will allow them to remain competitive in the job market and to provide them connections to employers who value their experience. Working with communities throughout the state, the Arizona Plan for the Mature Worker seeks to increase opportunities for citizens, through developing a healthy exchange of ideas and dialog among the mature workforce, business and industry, government, and their local communities.

## **KEY ELEMENTS OF THE ARIZONA PLAN**

Arizona will partner with the AARP Foundation's Workforce Initiative to leverage the momentum of the Initiative to benefit Arizona's mature workforce. On February 28, 2005, the official national launch date of the AARP Foundation Workforce Initiative, the State of Arizona will announce the basic elements of its State Plan for the Mature Worker. Those elements include:

### **February – April 2005**

1. The Governor's Advisory Council on Aging Mature Worker Committee will seek to expand its membership to include representatives from the following agencies and organizations:
  - a. The publicly-funded workforce system from around the state, which can assist with the identification, recruitment, and screening of mature workers for potential placement.
  - b. The U.S. Department of Labor and state and local government entities, including the Area Agencies on Aging, the state and local Workforce Investment Boards, the Arizona Department of Economic Security and representatives from local municipal governments, Native American communities and veterans organizations.
  - c. Community, faith-based and cultural organizations, libraries and churches.
  - d. Public- and private-sector training institutions, including community colleges, which can provide needed skills training, along with any other additional assessment and/or placement assistance for mature workers.
  - e. Key business organizations, including AARP Featured Employers and Arizona's major private-sector employers.

#### March – November 2005

2. The Governor's Advisory Council on Aging's Mature Worker Committee, will convene several meetings in the different regions of Arizona that will bring the issue of mature workers to local companies, organizations and agencies. The goals of these grassroots meetings are to raise awareness about mature worker issues and to learn from employers the barriers that may prevent hiring mature workers. Findings will be reported back to the Mature Worker Committee and Governor's Advisory Council, which will be tasked to begin findings solutions to barriers such as training needs.

During this same time period, the Mature Worker Committee will collaborate with other state agencies and AARP to obtain existing data and collect information on the state of mature workers in Arizona and the future employment needs of Arizona's businesses.

#### September 2005 and each September in the following years

3. The Governor will designate a "Mature Worker Day," intended to help raise the visibility and recognition of the value of mature workers in the state. This could be done in conjunction with "National Employ the Older Worker Week."

#### October – November 2005

4. After hosting regional meetings and reporting the findings of the meetings, The Governor's Advisory Council on Aging's Mature Worker Committee will convene an "invitation-only" statewide meeting to inform the state's employers and other organizations associated with mature workers about the regional findings and solutions. At this meeting, AARP tools for helping businesses retool their policies will be shared. In addition, discussions will be held to bring other business issues to the Committee and goals for a State Mature Worker Plan will be established.

Also during this time frame, at least one Mature Worker Job Fair will be held.

#### December 2005 – March 2006

5. Following the fall 2005 meeting on the Mature Worker, the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging's Mature Worker Committee will examine the feasibility and advisability of requesting the Governor make a request to the state legislature to convene an interim study committee on the issues, the barriers, and the opportunities for the expanded employment of mature workers. This would engage the Arizona legislature and would provide context and understanding around both the issues and the opportunities for enhanced employment for mature workers.

#### March – April 2006

6. Arizona Committee members will apply (in 2005) to be presenters at the 2006 American Society on Aging/National Council on Aging joint conference, to present information gathered from employers and mature workers about their reciprocal needs as well as to provide a basic guide for states interested in holding a mature worker awareness day/job fair.

May 2006

7. The Mature Worker State Plan development will be a large part of the Governor's biennium Conference on Aging. In advance of the 2006 Conference, with the significant assistance of the AARP Foundation, research will have been completed on the current level of employment of Arizona's mature workers, and on the successes as well as the barriers to finding employment in the state. This research will help to form the basis of the content for the Mature Worker aspect of the conference. Research available from AARP will also be used to help underline the level of concern, the need for employment, as well as the specific barriers to it.

The state conference will give the key stakeholders a chance to review the issues affecting opportunities for mature workers. The key conference events could include meetings of the Chambers of Commerce, the state and local Workforce Investment Boards, the trade associations that are supportive of the Workforce Initiative, small business associations, training institutions, etc. In short, this would be a campaign to include the issues of mature workers "on the agenda" of the key opinion leaders and of those organizations with the capacities to help mature workers.

Further, by focusing the mature worker issue at the 2006 Conference on Aging, this conference would seek to:

- a. Raise the state-level visibility, interest, and recognition of mature workers within the media and among opinion leaders.
- b. Convene people from the critical components of the various systems important to the identification, recruitment, assessment, screening, training, and placement of mature workers to review what the various systems are doing currently and to report out what further could be done to enhance these offerings to mature workers.
- c. Focus the leadership of large, medium and small Arizonian businesses on mature workers and on the means by which they can access them, thereby extending the reach of the Workforce Initiative to employers large and small. .
- d. Use the influence of the Governor to enhance the state and local workforce systems as well as the community colleges and public-sector training systems' programs so that they better meet the needs of mature workers for assessment, counseling, training, and placement.
- e. Establish a State Plan of Work for the mature workforce that will be initiated after the 2006 Governor's Conference on Aging. The State Plan of Work will have a series of ongoing activities, guided by Governor's Advisory Council on Aging's Mature Worker Committee, with a set of goals to reach each critical component of the Arizona economy including:
  - Employers, both large and small;
  - The Workforce System;
  - Training institutions;
  - Labor leaders;
  - Tribal leaders; and
  - Hispanic-American and other ethnic and cultural leaders.

May 2006 – December 2006

8. As part of the State Plan of Work, AARP and the Mature Worker Committee will create and implement a state communications campaign. Working with the AARP Foundation and the AARP Arizona State Office, the Committee will produce a multi-media campaign to raise awareness following the 2006 event. The campaign could include posters, billboards, and TV and radio coverage – either pro-bono or paid advertising, which would be co-sponsored by AARP.